United Nations A/66/263

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 August 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
Report of the Economic and Social Council

United Nations Population Award 2011

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award, established by the Assembly in its resolution 36/201. The report covers the year 2011, and was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/112.

* A/66/150.

11-44352 (E) 230811

Please recycle

Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award 2011

I. Introduction

1. On 17 December 1981, by its resolution 36/201, the General Assembly established the United Nations Population Award. The Award is presented annually to an individual or individuals, to an institution or institutions, or to any combination thereof, for the most outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of population questions or to finding solutions to them.

2. The Committee for the United Nations Population Award selects the laureate for the Award. The Committee is composed of representatives of 10 States Members of the United Nations, elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of three years.

3. In decision 41/445, the General Assembly amended article 2, paragraph 1, of the regulations governing the United Nations Population Award, so that an individual and an institution could share the award.

4. In decision 1987/129, the Economic and Social Council amended the rules of procedure of the Committee for the Population Award accordingly.

5. The current elected members of the Committee are Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Jamaica, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Norway and the United Republic of Tanzania.

6. During its organizational meeting, on 5 January 2011, the Committee elected Ambassador Maged A. Abdelaziz (Egypt) as Chair for 2011.

II. United Nations Population Award 2011

7. The Committee received 10 nominations from qualified nominators for the 2011 Award. Of these, five were for the individual category and five were for the institutional category. On 9 March 2011, in accordance with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, and after a thorough review of the nominations, the Committee selected Professor Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the individual category, and the Institut de formation et de recherche démographique, based in Cameroon, in the institutional category.

8. The Committee selected Professor Abbasi-Shavazi in recognition of (a) his exemplary contribution to understanding the dynamics of fertility decline in the Islamic Republic of Iran, by demonstrating the linkages between improving the education and status of women — in particular, by facilitating their access to reproductive health services — and smaller families; (b) his contributions to improving the understanding of values and beliefs related to family and demographic behaviour, through studies in nearly 20 countries that demonstrate that social, economic and cultural differences among countries are more important than religion as explanations of fertility differentials, and that gender equality, delayed marriage and lower fertility are both causes and consequences of socio-economic

development; and (c) his success in serving as a bridge between the world's outstanding demographers and Iranian scholars and programme managers.

9. Professor Abbasi-Shavazi is a social sciences academician. After completing his BA in social sciences (Esfahan University, Islamic Republic of Iran, 1987), he obtained an MA in demography from the University of Tehran (1991), and a PhD in demography at the Research School of Social Sciences of the Australian National University in 1998. His professional career has combined teaching, demographic research, and advisory and policy services. His work has focused on population and development, reproductive health and fertility, family change, immigration and refugees. Since 2001, he has been Chair of the Division of Population Research at the University of Tehran.

10. As a social sciences researcher, Professor Abbasi-Shavazi has contributed to understanding the dynamics of fertility decline in the Islamic Republic of Iran, demonstrating that improving the education and status of women, as well as their access to reproductive health services, has facilitated the adoption of smaller family size ideals. He has conducted research on the situation of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and he is also the Chair of the Scientific Panel on Refugees at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. He has played a major role in training and guiding a new generation of demographers in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

11. Professor Abbasi-Shavazi has been instrumental in establishing and consolidating population institutions at national and international levels. He has served as a member of numerous professional and advisory boards of population journals and professional associations. He was a leading force in creating the Asian Population Association, of which he is the current President. Since 2007, he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh. In 1993, he was nationally recognized after he co-authored a textbook on population and family planning that became the manual used by the Ministry of Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 2009, he prepared the Population Assessment Report for the Islamic Republic of Iran, in collaboration with the country's Ministry of Health and the United Nations Population Fund.

12. Professor Abbasi-Shavazi has had a long history of research collaboration with the Australian National University and is now Future Fellow at the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute. His decade-long research collaboration with researchers at the Australian National University on the sharp fertility decline in the Islamic Republic of Iran culminated in a book, *The Fertility Transition in Iran: Revolution and Reproduction*, published by Springer, which won the 2011 World Prize for Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since 2006, Professor Abbasi-Shavazi has been an active member of the Developmental Idealism Study Group at the University of Michigan. The Group has been studying values and beliefs related to family and demographic behaviour in nearly 20 countries; the results of this interdisciplinary subject have demonstrated that gender equality, delaying the age at marriage, and achieving lower fertility are both causes and consequences of socio-economic development. Professor Abbasi-Shavazi has promoted the view that social, economic and cultural differences among countries are more important than religion as explanations of fertility differentials.

13. The Committee for the United Nations Population Award selected the Institut de formation et de recherche démographique (IFORD) in recognition of its achievements since 1972: (a) training African population specialists, including more than 500 African demographers; (b) conducting research relevant to understanding African population issues in the areas of poverty, sexual and reproductive health, gender and demography, and migration; (c) conducting research on the linkages between population, environment and development, critical to capacity-building and policymaking in more than 26 countries in Africa and the Indian Ocean region; (d) offering technical support to countries to conduct their population censuses, establish local research activities, provide local training, create and manage databases, and provide advice on formulating and evaluating population policies; and (e) producing respected, high-quality scientific publications, including the *Bulletin de Liaison*.

14. IFORD is an African academic institution dedicated to training population specialists and to conducting research. IFORD was created upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa. It began its activities in 1972 and is headquartered in Yaoundé. IFORD is linked academically to the University of Yaoundé. IFORD has three principal goals: (a) to train African teams in the field of population and development; (b) to conduct research relevant to understanding African population issues; and (c) to offer technical support to countries in the field of population and development.

15. The training programme at IFORD has two levels — the first one leads to an MA degree in demography, and the second one leads to a PhD degree in demography. Since its creation, IFORD has trained more than 500 African demographers through these two programmes. More recently, IFORD has expanded its capacity to provide short training programmes of three to five weeks' duration.

16. IFORD has a continuous programme of research that concentrates on five areas: poverty; sexual and reproductive health; gender and demographic issues; migration; and the linkages between population, the environment and development. Research projects are conducted by the staff of IFORD, with the participation of its graduate students and visiting scholars. In the area of technical support, IFORD assists African countries in conducting their population censuses, establishing local research activities, providing local training, creating and managing databases, and providing advice on formulating and evaluating population policies. Two recent examples are the in-depth, three-year study on the linkages between poverty and unmet needs in reproductive health among adolescents and young people in Central Africa; and the study on adolescent reproductive health policies and programmes in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Togo.

17. IFORD is the leading institution in Africa and the Indian Ocean region for training, research and technical assistance in the field of population, serving 26 countries. IFORD has a long list of scientific publications; in 1979, it launched the *Bulletin de Liaison*, the main instrument for disseminating information. Other periodic publications, including *Les Annales de l'IFORD*, *Les Cahiers de l'IFORD* and *Les Dossiers de l'IFORD*, have complemented the *Bulletin de Liaison*. Recently, the National Statistical Office of Cameroon assisted IFORD in installing the National Data Archive application to make survey metadata and microdata available online to the general public.

III. Financial matters

18. As at 31 December 2010, the Trust Fund for the United Nations Population Award had a total fund balance of $1,782,100.84. Interest income in 2010 was $28,405.02. Expenditure in 2011, including prizes given to the two laureates, totalled $80,845.51.